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(54) **MACHINING TOOL**

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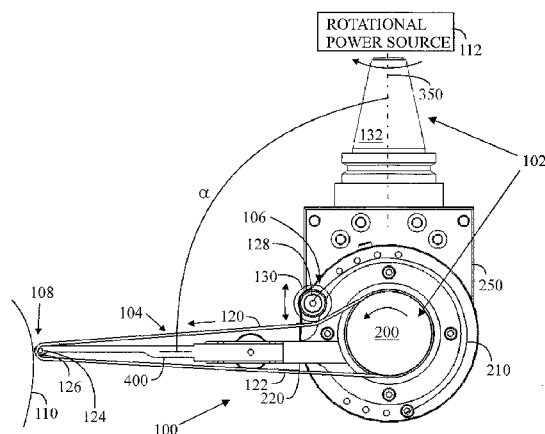
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A machining tool includes a power transmission mechanism, a circular machining belt, a tightening mechanism and a contact mechanism for tool contact with an object to be machined. The power transmission mechanism of the machining tool has a mechanical connection with a rotational power source. The contact mechanism and the power transmission mechanism have a desired distance therebetween. The circular machining belt is looped between the contact mechanism and the power transmission mechanism for causing the circular machining belt to move between the contact mechanism and the power transmission mechanism in response to the rotation of the power transmission mechanism for machining the object. The tightening mechanism is configured to press sections of the circular machining belt between the contact mechanism and power transmission mechanism towards each other.

11 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



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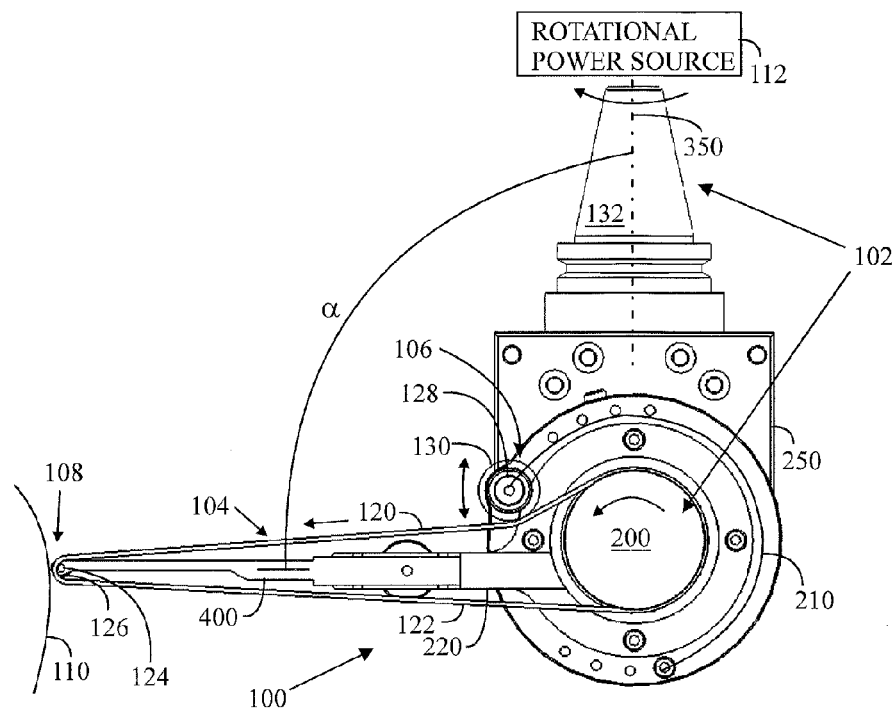


FIG. 1A

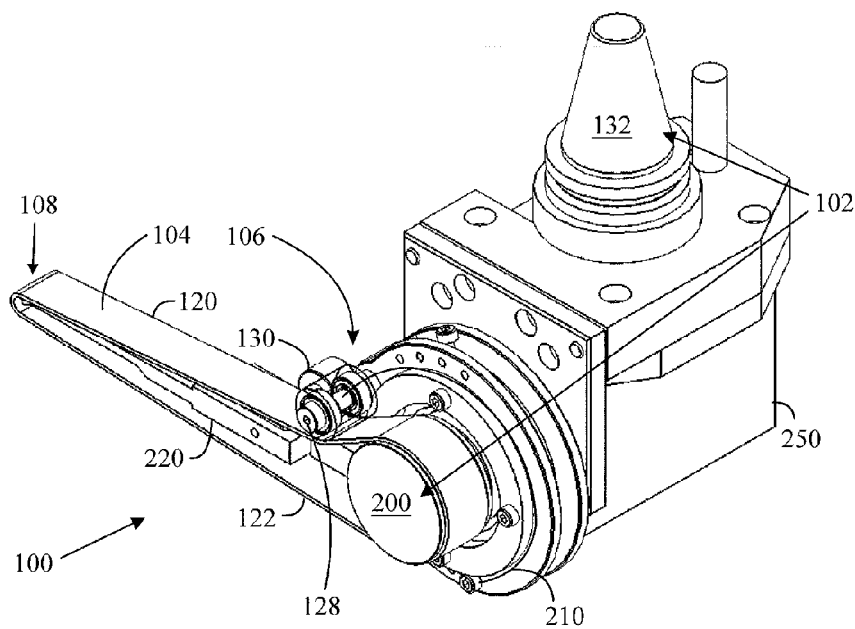


FIG. 1B

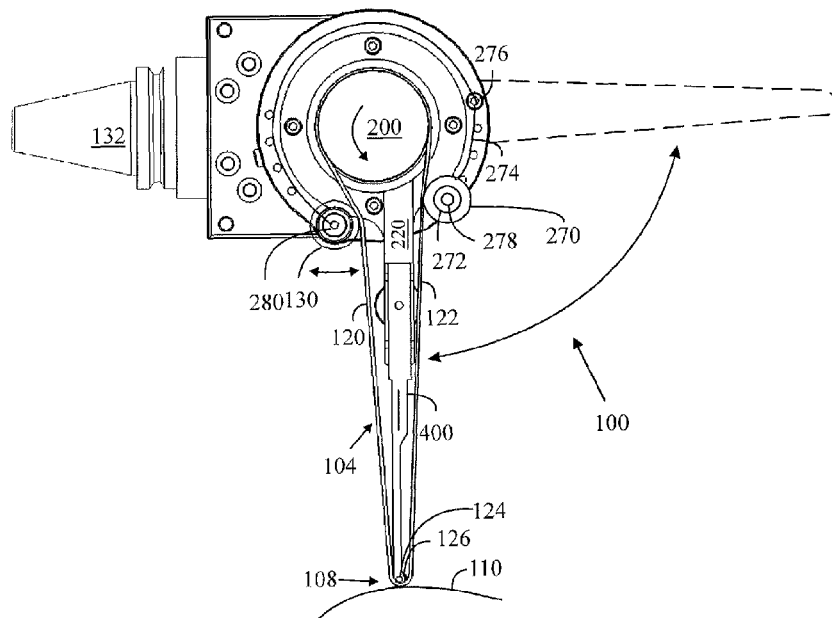


FIG. 2

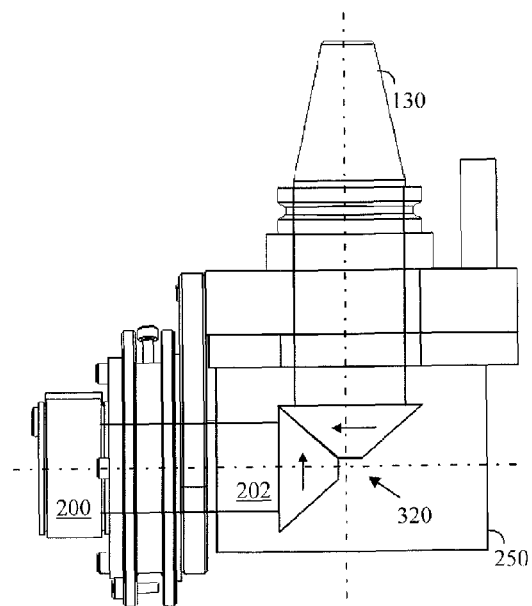


FIG. 3

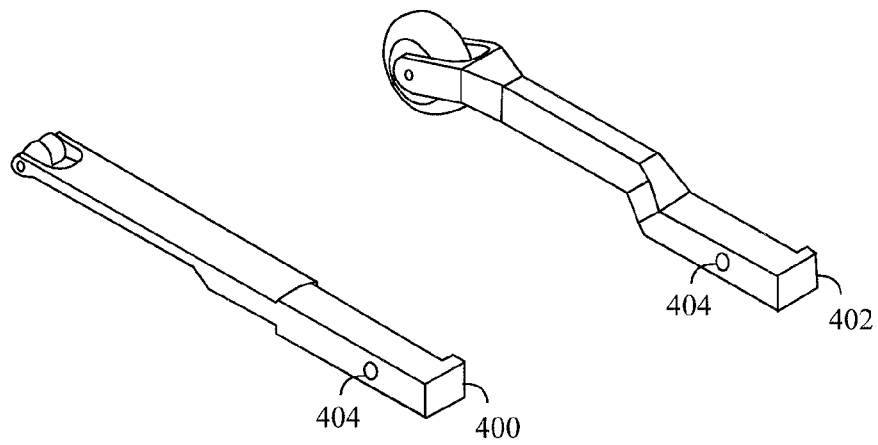


FIG. 4

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MACHINING TOOL**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

This application claims priority to European Application No. 13154165.8, filed Feb. 6, 2013, which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

1. Field

The invention relates to a machining tool.

2. Description of the Related Art

A machining tool such as a belt grinder which is repeatedly connectable to and releasable from a robotic arm has a grinding belt rotating over rollers. One of the rollers is at a tip of a contact arm for bringing the grinding belt in contact with the surface of a machined object. Another roller is a power transmission roller which provides kinetic energy with the grinding belt when it is rotating. The machining tool has also a motor for rotating the power transmission roller. The motor is typically an electric motor or an air motor. Such a robotic machining tool arrangement has problems. For example, opening a mechanical coupling between the machining tool and the robotic arm is not enough for separating the machining tool from the robotic arm but the electric wires or pressure hoses must also be separately released. Correspondingly, after a mechanical coupling between the machining tool and the robotic arm a separate electrical or pneumatic coupling must be made manually which is frustrating and complicated.

Furthermore, the grinding belt must be properly tensioned when it is used for grinding. Similar to coupling and decoupling of the machining tool, the tensioning is also manual work. The grinding belt is tightened by extending the contact arm between the rollers. However, a grinding belt may need tightening several times during use which is impractical and bothersome. It is also a disadvantage that the change in length of the contact arm also changes the location of the grinding contact to the object from the machining tool point of view. That makes it difficult or impossible for the robot to automatically aim the machining tool to a desired place on the machined object which may lower or spoil the quality of the end product.

Hence, there is a need for a better machine tool.

SUMMARY

The following presents a simplified summary of the invention in order to provide a basic understanding of some aspects of the invention. Its purpose is to present some concepts of the invention in a simplified form as a prelude to the more detailed description that is presented later.

An aspect of the invention relates to a claim 1.

It should be appreciated that all combinations of the various embodiments and features of the invention are possible and within the scope of the present invention as claimed.

The present solution provides advantages. The new features in coupling of both the machine tool as such and the machining belt become easier and reduce manual work. Furthermore, the machining belt needs no repetitive tensioning.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the following the invention will be described in greater detail by means of exemplary embodiments with reference to the attached drawings, in which

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FIG. 1A shows a side view of an example of a machining tool with one spring roller;

FIG. 1B shows an example of the machining tool from an oblique angle;

FIG. 2, shows an example of a tightening mechanism comprising more than one spring roller and turnable direction of an arm;

FIG. 3 shows an example of the machining tool from a back side with a view of an example of a gear inside the machining tool; and

FIG. 4 shows examples of contact arms.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Exemplary embodiments of the present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which some, but not necessarily all embodiments of the invention are shown. Indeed, the invention may be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein. Although the specification may refer to “an” embodiment in several locations, this does not necessarily mean that each such reference is to the same embodiment, or that the feature only applies to a single embodiment. A single feature of an embodiment may be combined with one or more features of a different embodiment or different embodiments to provide further embodiments.

FIG. 1A presents a machining tool **100** directly from a side and FIG. 1B presents the machining tool **100** from an oblique direction. The machining tool **100** comprises a power transmission mechanism **102**, a circular machining belt **104**, a tightening mechanism **106** and a contact mechanism **108**. The contact mechanism **108** is used for a tool contact with an object **110** to be machined.

The machining belt **104** is a loop belt without a beginning and an end. A loop has a shape of a round or oval ring and it may be formed from a band of material by turning opposite ends of the band towards each other and fastening the ends together, for example.

The machining tool **100** may be meant for shaping and/or finishing the object **110**, for example. The machining tool **100** may be a belt grinder or the like to be used in a robotic arm. Correspondingly, the machining belt **104** may be an abrasive belt, a sanding belt, a grinding belt, a deburring belt, a blending belt, a finishing belt, a polishing belt or the like for removing material from the surface of an object **110**. A width of the machining belt **104** may be 1 mm to 50 mm, for example. A length of the machining belt **104** may be 10 mm to 1000 mm (depending on contact arm), for example.

The power transmission mechanism **102** of the machining tool **100** can be mechanically coupled with a rotational power source **112** which may be realized on the basis of a connection part **132**. An arrow shows an example of the rotation direction of the connection part **132** which corresponds to that of the rotational power source **112**. The direction of rotation may also be altered. The connection part **132** has a shape and structure which fits with the connecting part of the rotational power source **112**. The rotational power source **112** may comprise an electric motor or an air motor, for example. The power transmission mechanism **102** may turn the direction of the rotation axis by a desired amount inside the machining tool **100**. The turn of the direction of the rotation axis may be 90°, for example.

The contact mechanism **108** and the power transmission mechanism **102** have a structural design capable of receiving and holding the circular machining belt **104** for performing machining with the machining tool **100**. The circular machin-

ing belt **104** is thus looped between the contact mechanism **108** and the power transmission mechanism **102**. The contact mechanism **108** and the power transmission mechanism **102** have a desired distance shorter than about a half of the length of the circular machining belt **104** therebetween in order to enable the use of the circular machining belt **104** for machining. In an embodiment, the contact roller shaft **124** and the power transmission shaft **202** may have a contact arm **220** of a desired length therebetween for realizing the distance of about a half of the circumference of the machining belt **104**.

When the machining belt **104** is mounted, the circular machining belt **104** may circulate between the contact mechanism **110** and the power transmission mechanism **102** in response to the rotation of the power transmission mechanism **102**. In that way, the object **110** may be machined with the moving machining belt **104**.

In an embodiment, the circular machining belt **104** may be looped over a contact roller **126** at the tip of the contact arm **220** and a power transmission roller **200** for causing the circular machining belt **104** to move over the contact roller **126** and power transmission roller **200** in response to the rotation of the power transmission shaft **202**. Thus the transmission roller **200** supplies kinetic energy to the machining belt **104**. The contact roller **126**, in turn, rolls with the machining belt **104** with low friction.

The length of the contact arm **220** should be a little too short for mounting the machining belt **104** and thus the machining belt **104** may remain slightly loose without separate tensioning.

The tightening may be performed by the tightening mechanism **106** which may press sections **120**, **122** of the circular machining belt **104** between the contact mechanism **108** and power transmission mechanism **102** towards each other. The fact that the length of the contact arm **220** does not need to be changed for tightening enables working with good accuracy and without breaks.

In an embodiment, the tightening mechanism **106** may comprise at least one spring structure **210** and at least one spring roller **130**. One end of the spring structure **210** may be coupled with the spring roller **130** and the other end may be fixed to an immobile part of the machining tool **100**. The fixing point of the other end of the spring structure **210** may be near the power transmission mechanism **102** and the transmission shaft **200**. The spring structure **210** may comprise or be similar to a leaf spring or a wire spring, for example. The spring structure **210** may comprise a coil spring, too. The curve or the coil of the spring structure **210** may twist partly or fully around the transmission shaft **200**. The tightening mechanism **106** may be released for changing the machining belt **104**. The tightening mechanism **106** may be easily released. The tightening mechanism **106** may be released by loosening a screw **280** attaching the spring roller **130**. Also the screw **276** may be released.

In an embodiment, the tightening mechanism **106** may have a spring shaft **128**, and the spring roller **130** may be coupled with the spring shaft **128** of the tightening mechanism **106** for enabling rotation of the spring roller **130** round the spring shaft **128** with the speed of the machining belt **104** during pressing against the machining belt **104**. Between the spring shaft **128** and the spring roller **130** there may be a bearing. The spring structure **210** causes a spring force towards the machining belt **104** and that is why the spring roller **130** presses against the machining belt **104** with the spring force which results in a proper tensioning of the machining belt **104**.

In an embodiment, the tightening mechanism **106** may have a single spring roller **130** which presses against one

section **120** or **122** of the circular machining belt **104** between the contact roller **126** and power transmission roller **200** towards another. In such a case, one section **120** (alternatively **122**) moves towards second section **122** (alternatively **120**) because of the pressure while the second section **122** (alternatively **120**) is static in that respect. However, the machining belt **104** may be rotating round the contact mechanism **108** and the power transmission mechanism **102**.

In an embodiment shown in FIG. 2, the tightening mechanism **106** may comprise more than one spring roller **130**, **270** which may press both circular machining belt sections **120**, **122** facing one another between the contact roller **126** and power transmission roller **200** towards each other. The tightening mechanism **106** may have a spring roller **270**, a shaft **272**, a spring structure **274** and a fixing screw **278** of its own.

By tightening the machining belt **104** with the tightening mechanism **106** the distance between the contact mechanism **108** and the power transmission mechanism **102** does not need to be changed. That is an advantage for a robotic machining, for example, because any change in the location of the contact mechanism **108** which is the machining head causes problems in controlling the machining process. With tensioning mechanism **106** the location of the contact surface for machining the object **110** can be kept static. All in all, because the belt stretch take-up is eliminated by the tightening mechanism **106** instead of an adjustment of the contact arm **220**, the result is a precise and unchanged front contact roller **126** position which results in better controllability and end result.

In an embodiment, the spring roller **130** may have a rotational axis at least approximately parallel to the contact roller **126** and the power transmission roller **200**. With the parallel rotational axes the use of the machining belt **104** is easy.

In an embodiment, the contact mechanism **108** may comprise a contact roller shaft **124** and a contact roller **126** such that the contact roller **126** rolls round the contact roller shaft **124**. During operation of the machining tool **100**, the movement of the machining belt **104** causes the contact roller **126** to roll.

FIG. 3 presents a direct side view of the machining tool **100** from a different angle of view with respect to FIG. 1A. In an embodiment, the power transmission mechanism **102** may comprise a power transmission roller **200** and a power transmission shaft **202**. In an embodiment, the power transmission roller **200** is connected with the power transmission shaft **202** for enabling rotation of the power transmission roller **200** with the power transmission shaft **202**.

The power transmission shaft **202** has a mechanical connection **320** with the connecting part **132** for rotating the power transmission shaft **202**. The mechanical connection **320** between the transmission shaft **202** and the connecting part **132** may be realized with a gear. The gear may comprise toothed wheels at least two of them being engaged with one another. The gear may be used for changing or varying the rotational velocity between the toothed wheels and thus also between the connecting part **132** and the transmission shaft **202**. The change in velocity finally has effect also on the velocity of the transmission roller **200** and the machining belt **104**. Alternatively or additionally the direction of the rotation may be changed. An example of the gear is a bevel gear or the like, which turns the rotational axis by 90°. The connecting part **132** may rotate 1 rpm to 5000 rpm (rpm=rotations per minute), for example. The transmission roller **200** may rotate 1 rpm to 15000 rpm, for example. A possible rotation for the connecting part **132** and the transmission roller **200** may be 3000 rpm. In an embodiment, the gear ratio may be 1:1, for

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example, but the ratio may also be different. The machining belt **104** may then move 1 m/min to 2000 m/min, for example.

In an embodiment, the connecting part **132** may have a connection with the rotational power source **112** using a spindle connection. The spindle connection may be based on an industrial standard tool taper interface such as HSK63-F or ISO30. The spindle connection may also be called a gear connection. The spindle connection may be used also during storage of the machine tool **100**.

In an embodiment, the machining tool **100** may be repeatedly and releasably connectable with the rotational power source **112** such that the connecting part **132** is mechanically connected to and released from a counterpart of the rotational power source **112**. The spindle connection is suitable for repeatable connection and disconnection. With the mechanical connection such as spindle connection there is no need to connect and disconnect electrical wires or air pipes to the machining tool **100**.

In an embodiment, the machining tool **100** may comprise a casing **250** which may also be a supporting structure. One end of the spring structure **210**, **274** may directly or indirectly be fixed to the casing **250** for applying the spring force to the machining belt **104** in order to tighten it. The fixing to the casing **250** may be performed by a screw **276** or the like, for example.

In an embodiment shown in FIG. 4, the machining tool **100** may have a set of contact arm pieces **400**, **402**. One contact arm piece **400**, **402** may be selected for use between the contact roller shaft **126** and the power transmission shaft **200**. The length of the contact arm **220** with each contact arm piece **400**, **402** may be set when a tightening screw **404** is loosened. After a proper length is set the screw **404** may be tightened such that the length remains unchanged. The contact arms **400**, **402** may include straight arms, angled arms, shoe-shine style arms, for example.

As FIG. 2 shows the direction of the arm **220**, **400** may be turned in an embodiment. The arm which is turned by 180° with respect to the rotational axis **350** of the connecting part **132** is shown with a dashed line. The arm **220**, **400** may be turned from an angle α of 90° to an angle of 180° or even to an angle of -90°, for example. The turning may be performed continuously or discretely. The discrete turning may be performed with 15° steps, for example.

It will be obvious to a person skilled in the art that, as technology advances, the inventive concept can be implemented in various ways. The invention and its embodiments are not limited to the examples described above but may vary within the scope of the claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A machining tool, wherein the robotic machining tool comprises a power transmission mechanism, a circular machining belt, a tightening mechanism and a contact mechanism for tool contact with an object to be machined;

the power transmission mechanism of the machining tool is configured to have a mechanical connection through a connection part with a rotational power source;

the contact mechanism and the power transmission mechanism have a desired distance therebetween such that a contact roller of the contact mechanism and a power transmission roller of the power transmission mechanism have a contact arm of a desired length therebetween, a length of the contact arm needing no change for tightening;

the circular machining belt comprising a plurality sections is looped around the contact roller and the power transmission roller for causing the circular machining belt to move between the contact roller and the power trans-

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mission roller in response to the rotation of the power transmission mechanism for machining the object, wherein opposing sections of the belt between the contact roller and the power transmission roller are separated by a distance; and

the tightening mechanism comprises at least one spring structure and at least one spring roller for pressing sections of the circular machining belt between the contact mechanism and power transmission mechanism with a spring force to adjust the distance for tensioning the machining belt, wherein the spring structure is curved and extends at least partly around the outside of the power transmission roller.

2. The machining tool as claimed in claim 1, wherein the contact mechanism comprises a contact roller and a contact roller shaft;

the power transmission shaft is configured to have a mechanical gear connection with a rotational power source for rotating the power transmission shaft;

the contact roller is connected to the contact roller shaft for enabling rotation of the contact roller around the contact roller shaft;

the power transmission roller is connected with the power transmission shaft for enabling rotation of the power transmission roller with the power transmission shaft;

the circular machining belt is looped over the contact roller and the power transmission roller for causing the circular machining belt to move over the contact roller and power transmission roller in response to the rotation of the power transmission shaft; and

the tightening mechanism is configured to press sections of the circular machining belt between the contact roller and power transmission roller by the at least one spring roller to adjust the distance.

3. The machining tool as claimed in claim 1, wherein the machining tool is releasably connectable with the rotational power source.

4. The machining tool as claimed in claim 1, wherein the power transmission mechanism is configured to have a connection with the rotational power source using a spindle connection.

5. The machining tool as claimed in claim 2, wherein the tightening mechanism is configured to press one section of the circular machining belt between the contact roller and power transmission roller towards another section by a spring roller.

6. The machining tool as claimed in claim 2, wherein the tightening mechanism has a spring shaft, and the spring roller is connected with the spring shaft of the tightening mechanism for enabling rotation of the spring roller around the spring shaft with the speed of the machining belt during pressing the machining belt.

7. The machining tool as claimed in claim 2, wherein the tightening mechanism is configured to press opposing sections of the circular machining belt between the contact roller and power transmission roller by two spring rollers applied to different sections of the machining belt to adjust the distance.

8. The machining tool as claimed in claim 2, wherein the spring roller has a rotational axis at least approximately parallel to the contact roller and the power transmission roller.

9. The machining tool as claimed in claim 2, wherein the machining tool has a set of contact arm pieces, each contact arm piece being selectable for adjustable pivotal connection to the contact arm between the contact roller shaft and the power transmission shaft.

10. The machining tool as claimed in claim **2**, wherein the machining tool comprises a mechanical connection which connects the power transmission roller and the connection part.

11. The machining tool as claimed in claim **10**, wherein the connection part comprises a gear for changing or varying the velocity of the machining belt with respect to the rotation speed of the connection part.

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